

'Smears' led to ousting at Woolwich

Gary Young

THE ousted chief of the Woolwich Building Society yesterday accused senior managers within the company of conducting an "orchestrated smear campaign" to remove him because of the speed at which he was trying to reform the company.

Peter Robinson, who resigned as chief executive of the Woolwich on Tuesday after an internal audit revealed alleged "discrepancies" in his company expenses, said: "I deplore what I believe is an orchestrated smear campaign against me. I'm getting lots of feedback about what is going on — that staff have been invited to offer up any negative information about me and they are guaranteed that their jobs are not at risk."

"I can pinpoint that this is coming from a caucus of dissidents that I unsettled as I got everyone up to speed for the conversion. There are those who don't embrace change."

Mr Robinson, aged 54, who had been with the society for 33 years, said the resistance came from the managerial rather than board level, but refused to name names.

"You don't work within an organisation without upsetting a few and hopefully pleasing the many. Pleasing the many must have been what happened as I was appointed chief executive three months ago. I have not changed in three months."

The Woolwich yesterday denied there had been a smear campaign but admitted employees had been asked to provide information about Mr Robinson.

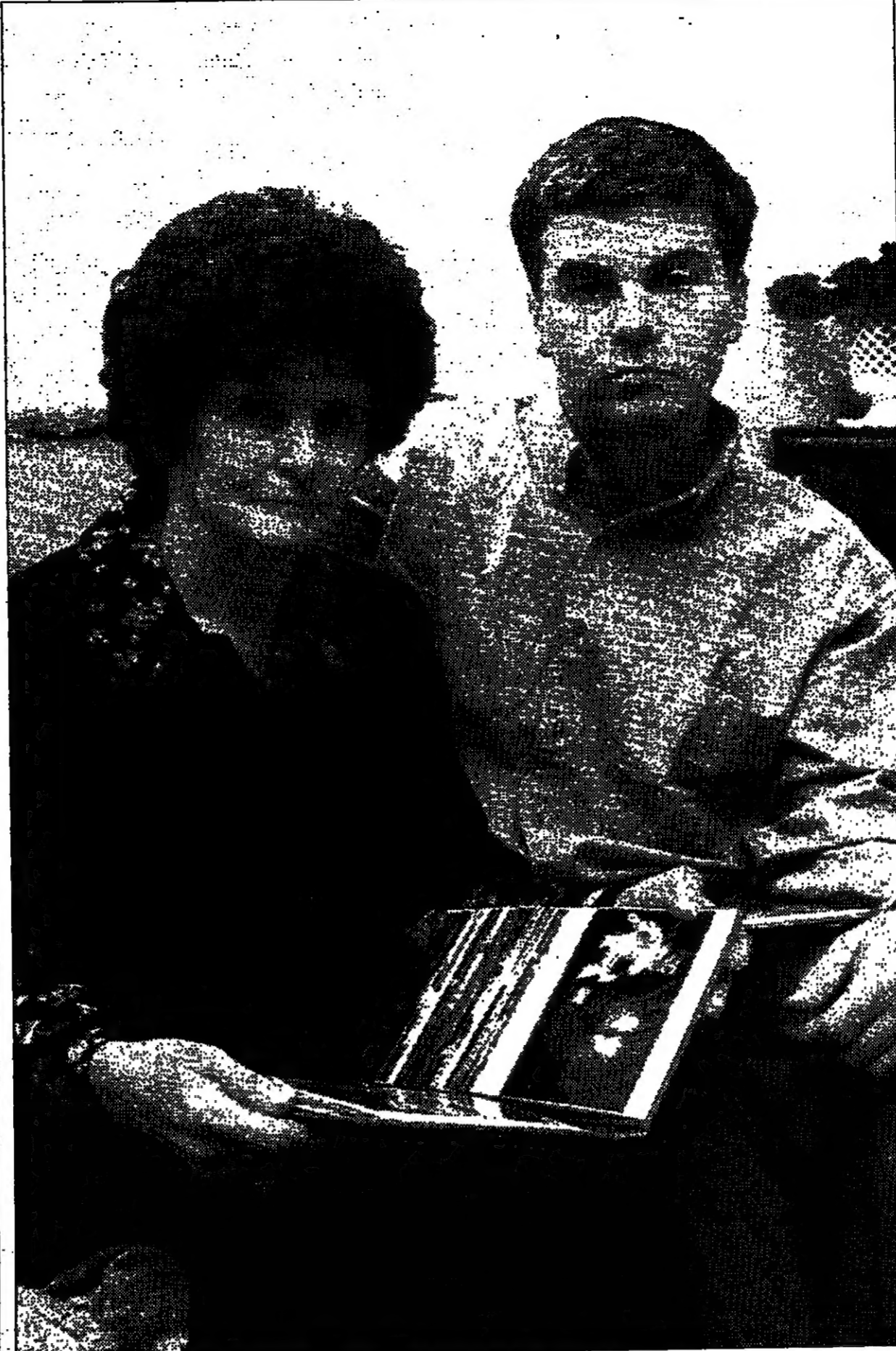
"We are conducting a thorough investigation and we would ask members of staff if they do have information... but this bit about guaranteeing jobs, I don't think that has been mentioned," said David Black, head of corporate affairs. The allegations had been the result of "journalist statements by the Woolwich," said Mr Black.

Mr Robinson resigned from his £300,000 job after an internal audit committee alleged that he had charged improvements on his £450,000 home in Kent, gardening bills and the purchase of a Range Rover to the society without authorisation. Previously Mr Robinson, who has denied all claims through his lawyers, had denounced people who attempt to make quick profits by investing in societies in the hope of windfall profits after a flotation as "carpet baggers".

The Woolwich has stated that it will not refer Mr Robinson to the police so long as he agrees to pay back the disputed expenses. Negotiations between the lawyers representing both the firm and Mr Robinson continue.

Yesterday, both he and his wife were both "shocked and saddened" by the events of the last five days. "The initial reaction of horror has turned to one of anger and determination to put these things right," he said.

But they had been cheered to get support. "One of the comforts in this fairly black period was that when we got home waiting on the doormat were letters of support from people within the organisation, from staff, from friends and from business connections. It was very heartwarming to see that I have had lots of responses — there must have been upwards of 40 or 50 letters."



Milica and Milica Popovich, the widow and son of Steven Popovich. (top left), at home in Oldham yesterday, and (above left) Mrs Popovich with her late husband

Family in plea after mugged pensioner dies

Martin Wainwright

THE family of a pensioner who died after being dragged from his car and mugged for £50 appealed for help in the hunt for his attacker yesterday, as detectives puzzled over the Yugoslav war veteran's last moments.

Police are trying to establish why Steven Popovich, aged 74, who was viciously kicked and punched by a teenager in Chapeltown, Leeds, took a wrong turning on his way to pick up a Serbian friend in an area he frequently visited and knew well.

The retired bus driver died of a heart attack after struggling with the youth, described as an Afro-Caribbean with a "pineapple" haircut, early on Saturday. Although in poor health, he tried to stop his attacker making off with his brown Rover-registered Lada car, and was dragged for some 15 yards while wrestling with the man through the window.

Mr Popovich's widow Dragica, aged 65, said yesterday at the couple's home in Shaw, a suburb of Oldham: "Whoever killed my husband must be caught before he kills again. He loved the people here and he just trusted people. He has never been nasty to anyone."

The victim's son Milan, aged 42, an optical systems designer, said: "My father wouldn't hurt a fly. He had no enemies."

Mr Popovich, whose sister was killed towards the end of the Bosnian war, appears to have missed a turning and found himself in an inner-city area whose reputation for violence rests more on opportunistic attacks than any general air of menace. He drove into a narrow side street, Bank Newton Grove, at a quiet time, 8.15am, where the teenager — who also ripped off his coat, wristwatch and wedding ring — was hanging about.

"Mr Popovich was sadly in the wrong place at the wrong time," said Det Supt Andy Brown, whose inquiry team began house-to-house inquiries in Chapeltown yesterday. "We need to catch the killer quickly. It was a cowardly, savage attack on a very old man. Mr Popovich was probably too old for what he tried to do, but he has got to be admired for his brave actions to stop the thief."

The attack was seen by a taxi driver from a local mini-cab firm, Quikline, and by residents who ran out as Mr Popovich pressed his horn and shouted for help.

The attacker was described as light-skinned, stocky and wearing a dark leather jacket with a green shirt hanging loose. A youth of similar description was seen nearby with a teenager wearing a

Yankees blue baseball cap, but detectives have not found evidence of an accomplice.

Tamrez Khan, aged 38, head of Quikline, said violence was frequent in Chapeltown and obvious targets took precautions — including local pensioners who used cabs to travel the short distance, sometimes as little as 40 yards, to Bank Newton post office. Postmaster Rangodh Singh Thind said: "Everybody is sickened, although it came as no surprise. There are muggings and beatings in Chapeltown on a daily basis."

Milan Popovich said: "We have a lot of friends in Leeds because there is a large Serbian community in Chapeltown. It was an area he felt

familiar with and maybe he must have thought that he would be safe."

Mr Popovich was widely known in Britain's Serb community. He was a vice-president of the Serbian Chetnik Association, and was visiting Chapeltown to take a colleague to a meeting in Leicester to discuss aid for Serbian victims of the Bosnian war.

"He was a proud man, who arrived in Britain with just a pound in his pocket but built up a good life," said Fr Zarko Medic, whose Serbian Orthodox church in Bradford was regularly attended by Mr Popovich's family. Prayers were said for the dead man yesterday at Serbian churches across the country.

Key republican dampens hopes of IRA ceasefire with talk of war

continued from page 1

had not squandered the year and a half of IRA cessation for selfish party political reasons, we might have been well on the way to the resolution of the age-old conflict between Britain and Ireland."

He accepted there was confusion in republican ranks about what the next steps should be, a remark that indicates the debate over whether to return to a full-scale campaign of violence or to take the political route is still continuing.

Mr Kelly rarely speaks in public and became known during the Stormont talks as "the silent one". His audience yesterday was not full of the usual Sinn Fein faces, and an IRA representative was shielded from view by comrades as he read out the organisation's annual Easter message.

Mr Kelly was introduced as "one of that intrepid band who took the war to England". He was convicted of being among the first Provisional IRA bombers to target London in the early 1970s. After many years in prison, escape and recapture in Holland, extradition and completion of his sentence, he was "released and took up the battle where he left off", the crowd was told.

Mr Kelly told the crowd the ceasefire had lasted "an incredible 18 months". For it to work again, there had to be unambiguous assurances that all-party talks would begin without any preconditions. Sinn Fein also wanted "time frames to achieve progress," suggesting that the party is pushing the British and Irish governments to set target deadlines for an outcome.

Despite the situation, Mr Kelly echoed Mr Adams by saying that "not all is doom and gloom". There were encouraging signs from grassroots Unionists, and the national question was once more to the forefront of Irish politics. Republicans had emerged from the long imposed isolation.

"I know that there is some confusion out there because of the fluidity of the situation," he said. Turning to the forthcoming elections in Northern Ireland, Mr Kelly said he was against them but "if we need to defend the rights of our electorate we will do so. But there is no going back to any Stormont assembly."

Chernobyl cancer cases soar among young

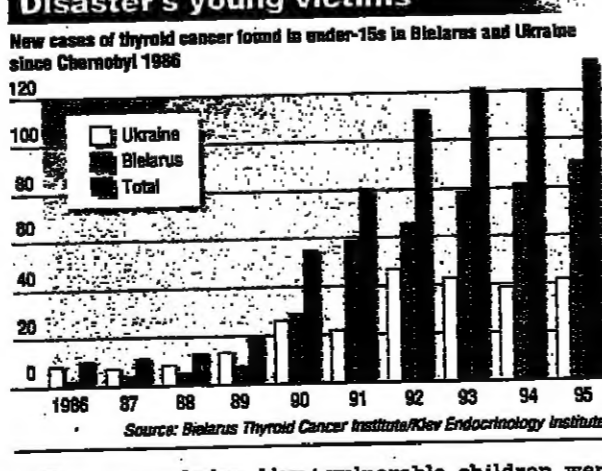
James Meek in Kiev

AN AGGRESSIVE strain of Chernobyl-induced thyroid cancer which has already left more than 1,000 young people scarred and on medication for the rest of their lives is claiming victims at a growing rate, and will not abate until well into the next century, doctors believe.

The latest figures from Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, to be presented today in Vienna, show a continuing increase in the number of thyroid cancer cases — particularly among children, and mainly from areas adjacent to the nuclear power station.

"If we see an increase now, it's only the beginning," said Alexander Poveretny, a Russian biochemist. "The peak will be in 20 to 25 years' time."

Valery Tereshchenko, of the Kiev endocrinology institute, where more than 600 Ukrainian victims are operated on, said: "No one predicted thyroid cancer on



have to take the hormones thyroxine every day for life.

A small number of children have died because their condition was not diagnosed in time. Sadly, most cases could have been easily prevented with common iodine, if only the authorities had warned people in time.

"Of course the best thing would have been to have taken iodine in the first hours after the accident," said Mr Tereshchenko. "For it to have been effective, it would have had to be enough to have daubed it on the skin or to have gargled with it."

Analysis of cases shows they are concentrated in the two regions most badly contaminated by the disaster — Gomel in Belarus and the Kiev region in Ukraine.

A scientific consensus has emerged that the thyroid disaster is directly attributable to Chernobyl. Some scientists say an increase in other cancers still lies ahead.

Chernobyl Diary, page 9

One of the young men strokes his fishnet stockings, eases them down his thighs, and muses: "What's so special about the Rocky Horror Show? Well, it's got everything that's 'bad' or inhibited — cannibalism, incest, homosexuality, cross-dressing, domination, everything."

Simon Hattenstone on Rocky Horror

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FORMS A WATER-RESISTANT BARRIER — NO NEED FOR PLASTERS

Decline in marxist ideas allows return to ethics-based interpretations of socialism but party remains wary

Christian revival in Labour of love

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

CHRISTIAN socialism, a feature of Labour thinking since the party's birth, has been undergoing a revival over the past five years. The resurgence has been helped by the decline of marxist economic determinism, and the return to more ethics-based interpretations of socialism inside the party.

kind of respectability it had previously lacked. Others in the upper echelons of the party who have connected their religious beliefs to socialism are Chris Smith, the social security spokesman, Paul Boateng, the legal affairs spokesman, Hilary Armstrong, the local government spokeswoman, John Battle, the energy spokesman, and Norman Hogg, a friend of John Smith and an Elder of the Church of Scotland.

None of them, as with Mr Blair, wear their religion on their sleeve or seem to put it before their politics, in the manner of David Alton, the semi-detached Liberal Democrat. But they do not mind drawing on the biblical understanding of fairness or

on what David Sheppard, the former Archbishop of Liverpool, described as God's bias towards the poor. In a recent book published by the Christian Socialist Movement, its chairman, Chris Bryant, pointed to the ugliness of George Bush's claims in the 1992 presidential election that God was not just an American, but a Republican.

Mr Bryant went on: "In Britain the Conservative Party has regularly attempted to portray itself as the party of the family, embracing traditional values, with its leaders very publicly attending Church." It would be wrong for Christian socialists to present themselves in the same way,

achievable through society. "Conservatism, by contrast, was based on the flaw that human beings conduct their lives on the basis of self-interested decisions taken in radical isolation from others." Mr Blair has always been very careful not to discuss his Christianity unless asked, or to force it upon anyone else. He has never appealed to the Bible to prove some party point. Nor does he see Christianity and Conservatism as incompatible.

Conservatives co-opt work ethic as mixed Church views add further fuel to unholy row



'Every single thing the Labour Party has done over the last three years has been undoubtedly self-interest in the pursuit of power. He portrays Pontius Pilate as a man torn between right and expediency. The Labour Party has consistently chosen expediency'

Ann Widdecombe Catholic convert Home Office Minister



'The work ethic is born from Christian belief and it is one of the fundamentals of Conservatism that everyone should have the opportunity to work to their maximum reward while providing a safety net below which those weaker than ourselves should not fall'

Michael Fabricant Conservative backbencher



'No politician should embark on trying to argue Christianity as justification for their ideology. He starts off by saying that he is not suggesting you can't be a Christian and a Conservative, but then he goes on and implies it'

David Wilshire Conservative backbencher Commons Methodist Fellowship convenor



'The Tory MPs who are having a go at Blair today may be feeling guilty about the way they have handled the Scott report and the BSE crisis. With them, it seems morality comes second'

George Austin Archdeacon of York



'He has not said anything'

Spokesman for the Roman Catholic primate Cardinal Basil Hume



'He is not prepared to be interrupted on a Catholic Feast Day'

Office of Environment Secretary John Selwyn Gummer a former Synod member but now a Catholic

Human experiment idea defended by professor



David Morton... questioned status of PVS patients

Vivek Chaudhary PROFESSOR in bio-ethics yesterday defended his controversial suggestion that people in a permanent vegetative state could be used for medical experiments instead of animals.

Mr Morton, who has been criticised by religious leaders and relatives of those who are in a persistent vegetative state, claimed yesterday that he was not calling for tests on PVS patients to become routine. His comments also come

at a time when a number of patients have made recoveries. Mr Morton said there was a debate as to whether PVS patients were actually people any more. Research on their bodies could take place when food and water had been withdrawn and before relatives took the decision to terminate the life of a PVS patient.

people will have made a living will to say 'we wish our tissue to be used for research as well as organ donation'.

Mr Morton joined Birmingham university six years ago. His appointment to oversee the use of all animals in experiments was a world first.

Straw promises to scrap Sinn Fein exclusion orders

Patrick Wintour

SENIOR Labour figures promised yesterday not to back down on long-standing opposition to exclusion orders which bar Sinn Fein sympathisers from the mainland.

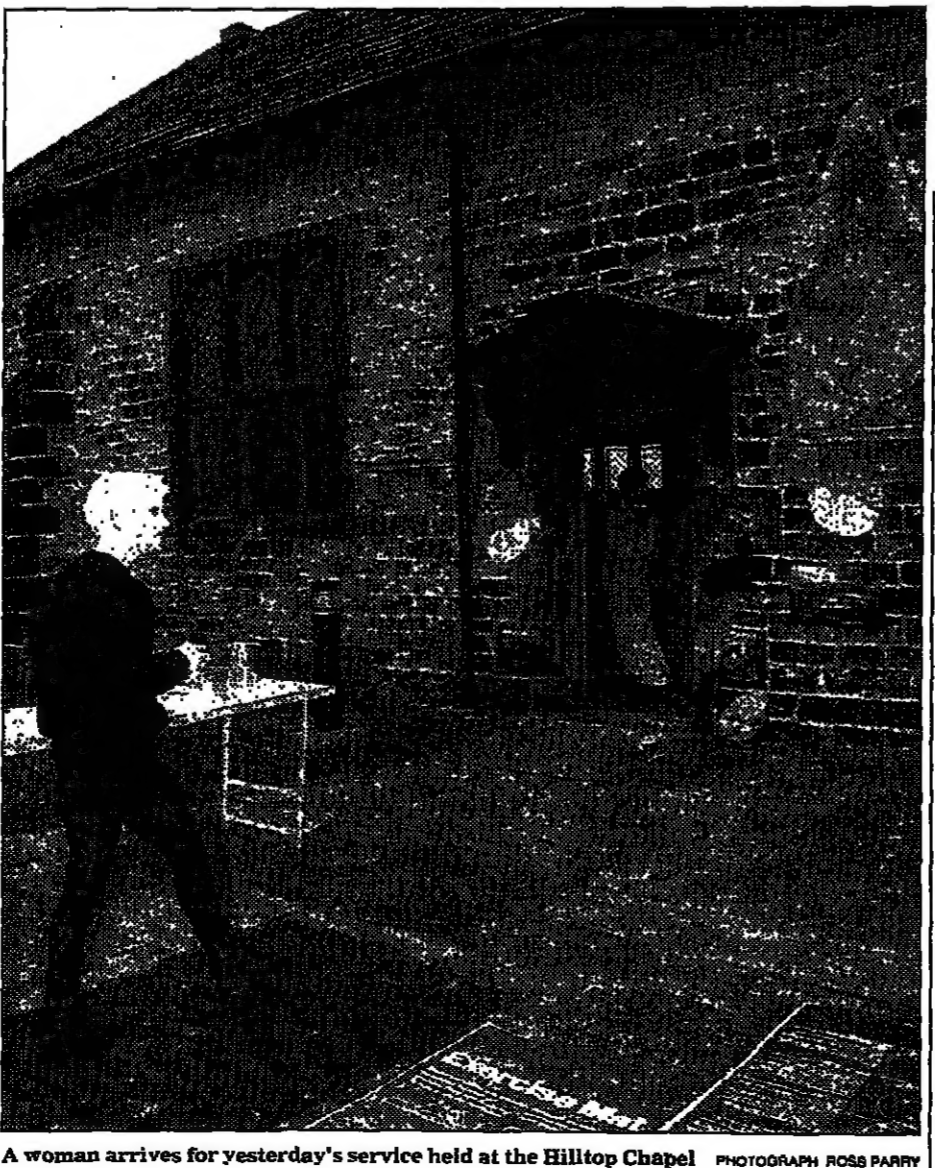
The Government had set up an inquiry into these orders under Lord Lloyd and Mr Dewar hoped that the Government would follow any recommendation he made to lift them.

Dunblane killer's rifle club to close as mark of respect

Peter Hetherington

THE RIFLE club that provided the Dunblane mass-murderer, Thomas Hamilton, with target practice could close down as a mark of respect for his 17 victims.

at the Whitestone military range. He last shot there two weeks before he turned his guns on the reception class in the gym of Dunblane primary school. This week the gym will be demolished by Stirling Council.



A woman arrives for yesterday's service held at the Hilltop Chapel PHOTOGRAPH ROSS PARRY

Wild music and lasers dropped as service is resurrected

Martha Walveright and David Ward

THE Church of England's experimental Nine O'Clock Service, which was resurrected in Sheffield last year amid sexual scandal, returned yesterday.

News in brief

Murder hunt as twins found dead in canal

POLICE have launched a murder inquiry after the bodies of identical twin brothers were found floating in the same canal eight days apart.

Lib Dems complain to BBC

THE Liberal Democrats have lodged a formal complaint with the BBC and ITV over the convention that final eve-of-poll party election broadcasts should alternate between the Government and Labour.

Hospital's plea on Internet

A HOSPITAL which has 40 patients in its area awaiting transplants has gone on the Internet with a plea to people to register to save a life.

Former spy base for sale

A FORMER top-secret United States spy base which kept track of Russian submarines has been put up for sale.

Court plea over 'baton death'

THE family of music promoter Brian Douglas, 33, who died in police custody after being arrested in Clapham, south London, last May, are to seek judicial review of a Crown Prosecution Service decision last week not to prosecute officers.

Clough 'stable' in hospital

FORMER soccer manager Brian Clough (right) was in a stable condition yesterday after hospital treatment for a chest infection.



River search for missing girl

DIVERS were last night searching a stretch of the River Darent, in Kent, near the home of a 15-year-old Nigerian girl, Deo Adebayo, who disappeared last week.

Change to elderly care costs

ELDERLY people may suffer unnecessary hardship because of confusion over the rules on funding long-term care, Age Concern warned yesterday.

Princess's mother charged

THE Princess of Wales's mother has been charged with refusing to provide a breath sample after being stopped by police.

Five share £21m lottery win

FIVE ticket holders shared Saturday's National Lottery rollover jackpot of £21.3 million over the Easter weekend, winning £4.2 million each.

Blunket pledges £3bn for schools

Enter tainment

صوتنا من الاهل

Teachers' conference applauds plan to fund repairs by partnership with banks • Selective education attacked

Blunkett pledges £3bn for schools

John Carvel Education Editor DAVID Blunkett, the shadow education secretary, yesterday won a sustained ovation at the National Union of Teachers conference in Cardiff after committing Labour to a £3 billion programme of school refurbishment funded through merchant banks.

'It is time to put away the buckets from under the leaking roofs'

Mr Blunkett contrasted the cost-effectiveness of this programme with the public money which would be wasted on implementing the Prime Minister's plan to establish a grammar school in every town. "If there were 300 grammar schools built in England and Wales, it would cost in the region of £2 billion to £2.5 billion and the number of children gaining access would be 4 or 5 per cent of the population." It would be "an obscenity".

newspapers out from the rattling window frames, time to start removing the temporary classrooms. "We are talking about hundreds of millions of pounds a year to be invested in our schools so that in a period of time we can simply eliminate the backlog," Blunkett said. The programme could take 10 years to complete, but a Labour local authority would run a pilot scheme soon to allow an immediate start after an election victory.

The scheme seeks to take the capital cost of school refurbishment out of the public sector accounts by negotiating contracts with private consortia to repair and maintain school buildings at an agreed price.

The consortia would take the risk, getting their pay-back from schools' normal annual budgets. Savings would be made from greater energy efficiency, better-managed maintenance, and economies of scale, with the benefit being shared between the school and the consortium.

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David Blunkett received an ovation from delegates after speaking yesterday at the National Union of Teachers conference in Cardiff

PHOTOGRAPH JEFF MORGAN

Tories target Smith's '£27 a week pension plan'

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

THE Conservatives have decided to target Labour's pensions plans, claiming the proposals may require an average of an extra £27 a week in compulsory contributions.

as based on false assumptions, but the Conservatives based its 1992 general election tax bombshell claims largely on controversial claims about Labour's pension plans. The £27 a week figure comes in a Central Office briefing paper which claims that if Labour wants to prove it is no longer the party of big spending, it will have to answer tough questions on pensions that it has so far dodged for four years.

national pensions and the possibility of a funded second tier pension scheme, run on an industry-wide basis, gradually replacing the State Earnings Related Pensions Scheme. Labour has asserted, on the basis of Australian experience, that industry-wide schemes, partly due to tendering competition, can lower costs to 2-3 per cent, whereas personal pension schemes can have costs as high as 25 per cent.

By contrast, "the 25 per cent costs for personal pensions is the cumulative impact of such costs on the investment pot by the time of retirement". To lower administrative costs, Labour would have to guarantee a large amount of business for pension companies, the Tories claim.

In question could then negotiate a better deal with a pension company. Contributions into industry-wide schemes at the Australian 12 per cent of earnings would reduce take home pay for the average person in the UK by £27 a week, Central Office claims. Mr Smith has already said he will not adopt the Australian scheme wholesale and does not want to go beyond the present 4.8 per cent compulsory pensions contribution, part funded by employer and part funded by employee.

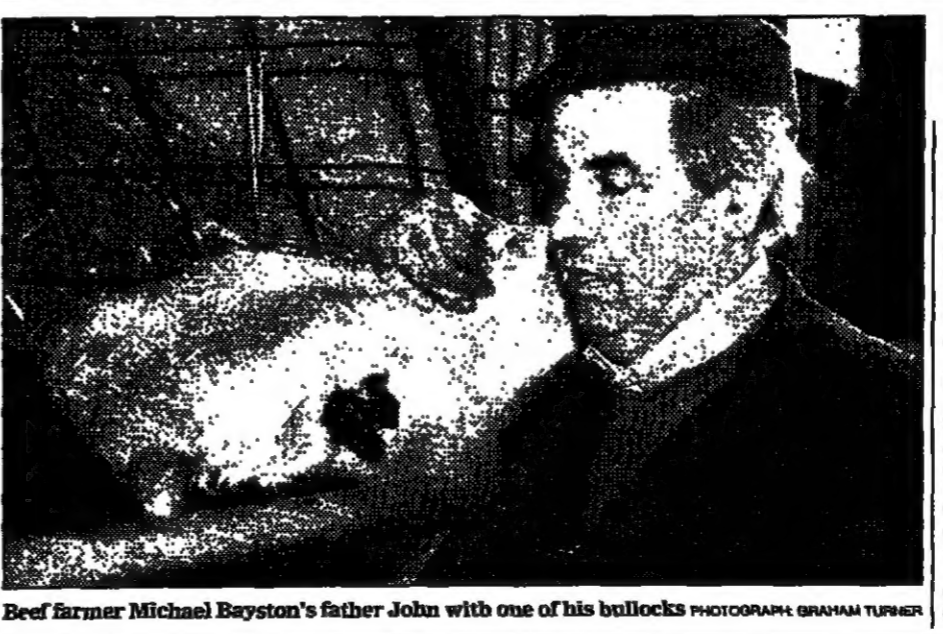
tably the Transport and General Workers Union. If Labour cannot afford to raise pensions in line with earnings, he will also infuriate the TGWU, if he rejects a flexible age of retirement that allows workers to retire at 60 on a full basic pension. Central Office is also preparing an offensive against an idea floated by Labour's social justice commission for a minimum standard of living for pensioners, in which income is topped up by the state for poorer pensioners with few savings. The Tories claim if Labour sets this minimum level above that of income support, it would punish savers.

Bullocks star in crisis tour

Martin Wainwright down on the farm to meet beasts enlisted to boost the beef trade

BULLOCK number 146 found himself in the big tourist league yesterday, as he helped launch British beef farmers' attempt Great Combes. Happily munching hay held by visiting children, he was star of the 150-strong Bayston beef herd at Gilbertdyke, east Yorkshire. "We've nothing to hide — no dodgy additives or anything," said 146's master, Michael Bayston, whose family has farmed 870 Humberside acres for more than 50 years. "So we decided to open the beef unit

13 months. Twenty should have gone to slaughter by now, but the Italian market, says Michael's wife Penny, has "collapsed". "Everyone's rallying round though," said Mrs Bayston. "We've got the Young Farmers' Club coming up, and we're having a sponsored 'Eat a 70oz Steak' competition, to raise as much as we can." But Charles Balgh, another blighted Yorkshire farmer now stuck with 40 unsellable bullocks, believes domestic confidence is returning steadily. "You can do without it for a while," he said, "but the moment comes when you say 'bugger this, we've got to have some beef'."



Beef farmer Michael Bayston's father John with one of his bullocks

Excessive use of pesticide 'could have led to epidemic'

EXCESSIVE use of a pesticide more than 10 years ago could have caused the BSE epidemic, it was claimed over the weekend. Mark Purdy, a farmer-turned-researcher, told the Edinburgh International Science Festival that farmers were forced to use phosphorus — a blend of organo-phosphates — in the 1980s to combat warble fly infestation. He claimed that massaging it into a beast's rump to ensure it penetrated hide, flesh and muscle and reached deep-burrowing larvae meant organo-phosphate toxins affected the animal's nervous system. Organo-phosphate chemicals are widely used as pesticides in agriculture, horticultural, fish farming, forestry, and veterinary medicine, and in the home for medicated shampoos, fly sprays, and flame retardant bedding, he told the scientists meeting at the Royal Scottish Museum.

Acute organo-phosphate exposure brings about an array of neurological, psychiatric, endocrine, and immunological conditions in humans, he said. The Government is still working on plans to handle the huge stock of cattle proposed to solve the BSE crisis, the Ministry of Agriculture said yesterday. But a spokesman denied a Sunday Telegraph report that one plan being looked at is the dumping of ground-up cow carcasses in the sea.

Entertainments

A large grid of theatre listings for London, including titles like 'Sunset Boulevard', 'Miss Saigon', 'The Phantom of the Opera', and 'The Wind in the Willows'. Each listing includes the theatre name, show title, and contact information.

MUSIC EXTRA

A grid of music listings for various venues, including 'Michael Ball', 'Ruddy', 'Passion', and 'The Wind in the Willows'. Each listing includes the artist/venue name and performance details.

Join in the Easter parade at Watlington! ... To advertise in this section call the Travel Team on 0171 611 9010 or the Entertainments Team on 0171 611 9100

Cybersex: empire of the senseless

Kevin Rafferty in Tokyo finds new technology is taking Japan's gender relations forward to the past as obliging virtual girlfriends perk up floppy disk sales and boys who never grew up can father their very own little princess



"PLEASE come back home and meet my girl," offered Yoshihiro Saito. "She's very cute, and has really fallen in love with me," he boasted. The shy, straitlaced trading company executive, aged 32, had always appeared to be a star at work but unsuccessful in love. His rabbit hutch flat seemed the usual bachelor clutter of books, papers, discarded clothes and dirty dishes. But Yoshihiro was beaming happily as he went to his desk and turned on his computer. In a few minutes the screen warmed up and a smiling, full-colour picture of a pretty woman showed up. She was Yoshihiro's virtual girlfriend, whom he had called "Princess Fuyuko". "We have a great time together," he chattered happily, pointing out that he talked and made decisions and Fuyuko reacted accordingly, going out on a date, eating, drinking, cuddling — even virtual sex was possible, but Yoshihiro had so far drawn the line at this. "Well, look at this place. I wouldn't really want to bring a nice girl like my princess back here, and I find love hotels rather cheap." Yoshihiro is by no means alone in preferring virtual friendships and sexual encounters to the real thing. Exciting Memory, one popular computer video game offering friendship and love affairs, including nudity, has been snapped up by more than 600,000 Japanese men in the 16 to 35 age range. A number of games have sold more than half a million copies. In Exciting Memory, the player has more than 10

young women with whom to play. He chooses the one with whom he will develop a relationship. In most ways it is true to life, except in one crucial aspect — she does not have the option of telling her virtual boyfriend to get lost. In Graduation II, the player assumes the role of a teacher who chooses what five girls in his class will study, tells them what they should do at the weekends and generally shapes their lives as they are about to leave school. There is interaction in this game in that, if the teacher pays special attention to one girl, the others will react by playing up, becoming cheeky and even dropping out of school. Yoshihiro seems quite happy with his virtual girlfriend and believes that by playing the game he is learning the techniques which may help him win friendship and even love with a real woman one day. Not everyone is so sure. A friend, Akira, found his virtual woman became more fascinating than his actual girlfriend, and he spent so much time on his computer that she became jealous. One day she went into his flat and did a bit of tinkering to turn the virtual woman into a witch in an attempt to cure Akira. She did — in that he was heartbroken and refused to speak to the real woman again. Men are quick to say that the games are harmless and may even help make men less shy. "There are no losers, and there is fantasy love which doesn't harm anyone," said Yoshihiro. But the few women who have seen such games — and few are, according to opinion polls — have a different perspective. "The way the virtual women behave is rather old-fashioned, the way that my mother's generation was



The real thing... Japanese women may be under threat from the booming market in computer girlfriends. PHOTOGRAPH DENIS THORPE

expected to behave — obedient servants of men," Masako Fujii, a woman colleague of Yoshihiro's, said. "We women are still struggling in this office against the role of perpetual tea-makers, that's still how modern men prefer us." The head of one company producing the so-called "developmental" games also conceded that men who had enjoyed virtual success playing the games might not find it so easy in real life. Some sociologists have gone further and complained that the games are built round the ideal of male control and are bad because they help perpetuate old myths.

Which may be why Ms Fujii is unmarried at 29, well past the traditional mid-twenties when women were expected to be married. "Yes, my mother kept reminding me that at 25 I would be stale Christmas cake and past my sell-by date," she said. "My younger sister got married at 22 last year, but she had just graduated and prospects of work were dim in the recession. My class were career girls and certainly not prepared to be bossed around by men." "Saito-san should stop playing with his fantasies and see that Fuyuko is damaging his real life."

'Risqué' game creates Daddy's girls to taste

SHE'S your little princess. You name her, wring your hands when she's sick, fret over her schooling. Like any caring father, you keep steady watch over her hobbies, clothes and manners. But if, after all your attention, she becomes a bar hostess strutting around in fishnet stockings, or a club-swinging street tough — no problem. Just reboot your computer and start again. The game is part of a hit series of Japanese software called Princess Maker, which gives the player control over

clothing of a girl character he "raises" from childhood. Even at 14,800 yen (290) per release, the series has sold a combined 200,000 copies, according to its creator, making it a bestseller by the standards of Japan's home computer market. Its creator, Takami Akai, hopes to finish an English-language version of the game this year, for export to the United States. But the game might raise some eyebrows in the West. The girl character is depicted in sexy, wide-eyed comic-book style, and can be programmed to dress in lingerie or sunbathe naked. "I find it very disconcerting," said Esauko Yamashita, a women's studies professor at Japan Women's University in Tokyo. "It's like incest."

Still, by the standards of Japanese late-night television or adult comics, Princess Maker is tame. There are no sexual encounters. Mr. Akai believes the game's appeal lies not in titillation, but in giving Japanese males a chance to fantasise about conquering the one place where they don't call the shots — the home. — AP.

Women flee glass ceiling

S Evelyn Britton

SOMETIMES when she visits home, Reiko wants to blurt out: "You're wasting your lives." Instead, she listens to her Japanese friends discussing their favourite restaurant and their dead-end "office lady" jobs. Reiko is one of an increasing number of young Japanese women who choose to work in the United States or in other Asian countries, to avoid bleak employment prospects at home. She hopes one day to return to Japan, but to a "career" job, rather than the secretary-stenographer-coffee-server position held by many of Japan's 27 million female workers. Women are often the first to be fired by recession-hit companies, said Masahiko Hata, aged 35, a Japanese accountant in Los Angeles. "When the economy got really bad, firms didn't feel they had the luxury to be politically correct." Japanese women still encounter a thick glass ceiling in business and politics, accounting for 7.9 per cent of Japan's administrative and managerial workers, compared with 40 per cent in the US. The result has been an exodus of talented, career-minded women. Many Japanese initially come to the US to study. Others leave out of frustration at a corporate culture which has traditionally stifled individuality and creativity. Many will never return to Japan — because of the opportunities overseas, a chance that they will meet and marry Americans, and the difficulties they would face as Japanese who had stepped off the traditional career path. Reiko is appalled by what she hears about the Japanese job market. "A friend of mine recently applied for a job at a good Japanese company and was asked whether she had a boyfriend," she said. — Los Angeles Times.

Seoul urges US patrol as North crosses line

SOUTH KOREA has asked Washington to send Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft to patrol the peninsula, the South Korean news agency reported last night, after North Korea sent troops into the demilitarised zone between the two countries for the third time since Friday. Escalating its challenge to a fragile peace along the cold war's last serious faultline, the North Koreans moved into the buffer strip yesterday, armed with mortars and heavy machine-guns. The operation, lasting two and half hours, was the largest of the three incursions so far by the North Korean People's Army into the demilitarised zone, a strip of land fixed at the end of the Korean war in 1953. The United States, which has played down the risk of renewed conflict on the divided peninsula, faced mounting pressure to make a strong show of resolve, much as it did last month during tension between China and Taiwan. The South Korean news agency Yonhap reported that officials representing Seoul and Washington were discussing the AWACS request. North Korea announced on Thursday it would no longer



obey the rules of the 1953 armistice agreement that ended a three-year conflict in which about 4 million people died, but which left the Korean peninsula technically at war. The 1953 accord bans heavy weapons from a 2.5-mile-wide buffer zone and allows each side to send only 35 military police armed with pistols into a joint security area at Panmunjom, 30 miles north of the South Korean capital, Seoul. The US said no more than 180 North Korean troops were involved in yesterday's incursion at Panmunjom. But South Korea put the number

at 300-400. The government of President Kim Young-sam, tainted by the death of a student protester and corruption, has used rising tension to rally support before parliamentary elections this week. More than 300,000 troops in South Korea have been placed on their highest level of alert for 15 years. A US military spokesman said the situation along the border was "tense and dangerous", but there had been no significant troop movements by either side. The North Korean troops arrived in 12 trucks yesterday evening at Panmunjom — a popular destination for South Korean daytrippers — and left without incident. North Korea has accused South Korea of preparing to attack and has said hostilities are now inevitable. "If the Kim Young-sam ring provokes a war like a newborn puppy that is too young to be afraid of a tiger, our people and the People's Army will mercilessly smash the aggressors," North Korea's state-run radio warned. The rhetoric and daily incursions at Panmunjom are seen less as a prelude to war than a risky diplomatic gambit to force Washington to recognise Pyongyang and enter direct talks on a formal peace treaty to end the 1950-53 war. Leader comment, page 3. Pass Notes, G2 page 3.

Model Marxist may pose as India's saviour

Suzanne Goldenberg in Calcutta meets the honest though uncharismatic octogenarian premier of West Bengal, who is being urged to take on the prime minister in the coming election

AS INDIA'S political parties self-destruct amid corruption scandals and internal feuding, an octogenarian communist has emerged as a potential saviour, held in equally high esteem by captains of industry and the champions of the poor. He is Jyoti Basu, aged 82, a capable rather than a charismatic politician who for 19 years has been the Communist Party of India (Marxist) chief minister of West Bengal. While the country has produced several leaders with mass regional appeal, Mr Basu is widely viewed as the single politician with the national standing to take on the prime minister, P. V. Narasimha Rao, in general elections this month and next, and he has been entreated to declare himself. Even if he does not put himself forward, Mr Basu could be the kingmaker should a coalition of regional and left-wing parties, the National Front-Left Front alliance, do well in the elections. Although Mr Basu has shunned the usual myth-making of Indian politics — the giant cut-outs, the projection of politicians as the numbs and dads of a nation — and never sought power at the national level, outside his na-

tive West Bengal, or even among non-leftwingers, he has a strong following. Surabhi Bannerjee, an English professor who is writing an authorised biography, said: "He is the ideal embodiment of communist ideals. So far, I haven't met anyone who has said anything adverse about Jyoti Basu. Even ordinary people, they all have the image that Jyoti Basu is above board." She attributes his popularity to his probity and his mystique. Mr Basu is known for his aversion to press intrusion into the lives of his businessman son and the three granddaughters on whom the usually impassive politician dotes. Apart from a media splash last year, when one granddaughter entered a beauty contest, the press generally respects his privacy. So far, he says, he is not interested in becoming prime minister. "My left party and other left parties don't have the strength. We don't take it seriously when people say why don't I become prime minister. What can one man do?"



In profile... Jyoti Basu, caught in his younger days

And within the last few years he has started to turn Calcutta around, erasing years of squalor and neglect. The eight-hour power cuts have become a distant memory, and people now reminisce fondly about a telephone system so notorious for its failures during the monsoon season that Calcuttans erected a memorial to the dead telephone. The homeless have been bundled off the pavements of central Calcutta, and roads which once resembled moonscapes have been mended. In September 1994 he did another apparent about-face, introducing a new industrial policy that actively courted foreign investment. His tenure should be judged, he said, on the changes he has brought to the

still exist, but the only red flag likely to be seen waving these days would be in the window of a car trying to negotiate traffic-clogged streets. The government has dropped the hammer and sickle in favour of billboard slogans, such as: "The Left Front government is determined to develop West Bengal industrially." Mr Basu says his version of liberalisation is far more cautious than the reforms the rest of India embraced in 1991.

will be good. We must not open our doors too wide." His government is generally acknowledged to be one of the least corrupt in India, where the party have seen a degradation of public life. But some critics say the fastidious and slightly dour Mr Basu has never escaped his middle-class roots. The son of an affluent doctor, he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain while studying law at Middle Temple before the second world war. After his return, he was the lone voice of the left for several years, in hiding from the British and later, jailed by the government of newly independent India. It was while he was on the run that the enduring anglophile finally learnt Bengali. At 19 years, there are signs of discontent with his government, especially among urban voters and members of his own party who are unhappy with his free market enthusiasm. But he remains unassailable. Virtually everyone expects his government to be returned to power in the state assembly elections which will be held in West Bengal on May 2 and May 7 — even the Congress (I) party which has formed national governments for most of India's history. "Give us another five years and maybe the death or retirement of Jyoti Basu, and then maybe, maybe we will come," said Sougata Roy, a leading figure in the West Bengal Congress (I) party.

The fact that the present Prince Edward speaks so warmly of his greedy, racist and fascist great-aunt is a moving tribute to the onward march of progress in the Windsor family. Paul Foot on the royals

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Warlords in Liberia

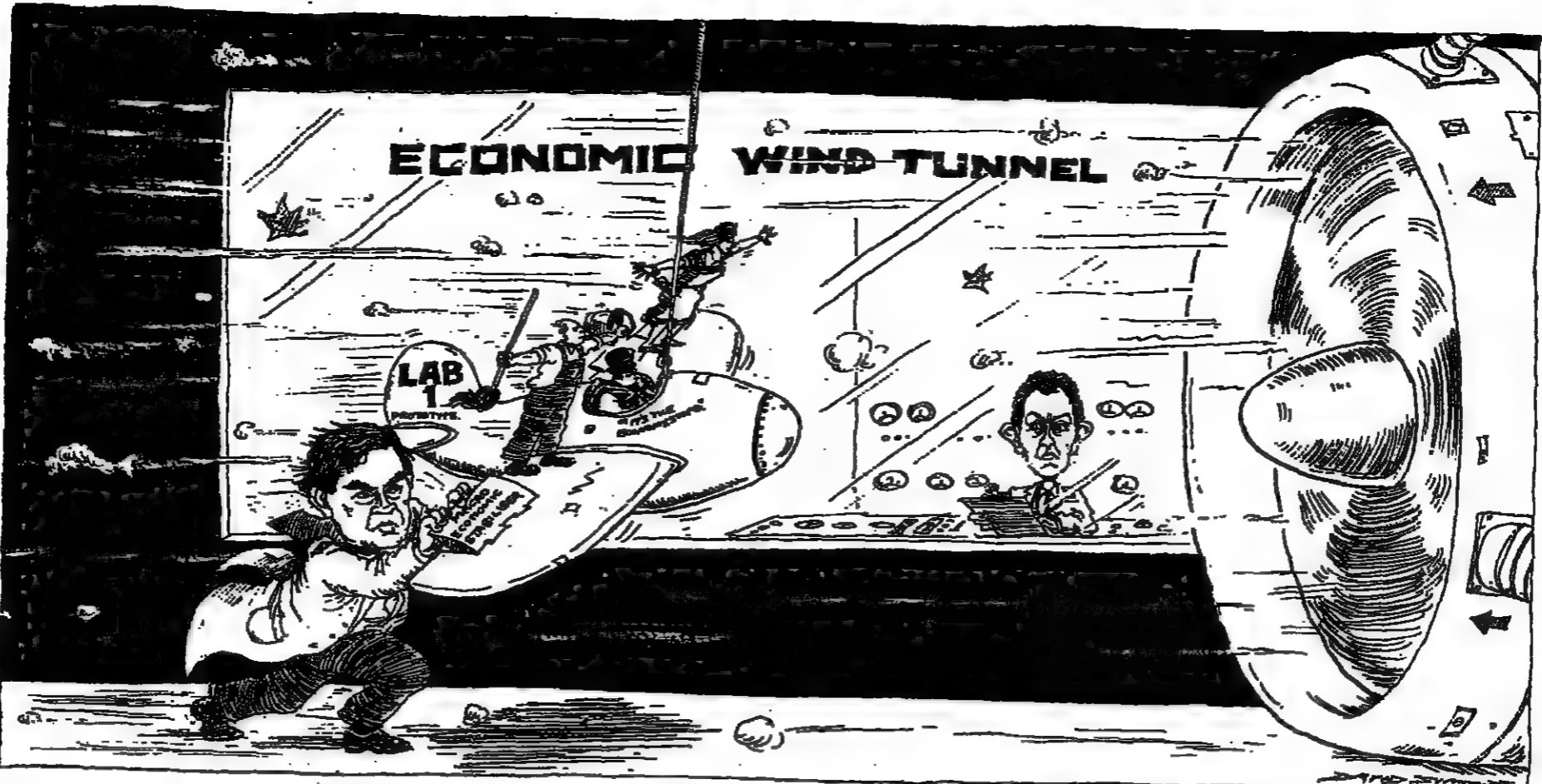
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'Opposition is not saying that past 17 years show capitalism is fundamentally flawed. Rather, it is staking a claim to manage capitalism better than the Tories'



'Those out of work for long period pay high price. Suicide rates, marital breakdown and effects of poverty on children all soar once the 12-month milestone is passed'

Red Rose Economics Week-long test of Labour policies begins with examination of macro and micro views

Internal truce is fragile in absence of war



Larry Elliott

'We have been through this so many times. Finally the economy is always going to be a Tory issue. Its theirs. They own it. However unfair it is, I wish it weren't so. But it is.'

groups so beloved of politicians found that voters put Labour to the right of the Liberal Democrats and saw Tony Blair as indistinguishable from John Major. This is hardly surprising. The vast bulk of the Thatcherite revolution — market forces and privatisation — is seen as irreversible. Parts of it — trade union reform, for example — appear to be thought of as beneficial. Not only has Labour moved unashamedly to the right on economic policy (and everything else), it has also wanted everybody to know it is moving unashamedly to the right. The answer to the murmurs of discontent, and there are plenty of them in the party, is always the same. Britain is a conservative (small c) country where people are wary of change. If we have to pitch our tents

somewhere to the right of where the SDP was at the time of the Limehouse Declaration in order to defeat the Conservatives, then so be it. This is a powerful argument, and there are many in the party who accept its depressing logic even while secretly hankering after a more radical approach. But the fifty-fifty line has its risks. One is that Labour's sales pitch fails to excite the voters, particularly if the economy does well over the coming months. The Opposition is not saying the past 17 years show that capitalism is fundamentally flawed, nor that the third of the workforce that has been on the dole for more than two years will get a £75 subsidy every week for six months. Under Labour, Mr Davies, who earns £3 an hour, would come half-price. The rationale for this scale of micro-economic intervention is two-fold. First, those who remain out of work for a long period pay a high price in terms of social exclusion. Suicide rates, marital breakdown and the effects of poverty on children all soar once the 12-month milestone is passed. Three months out of work is inconvenient; three years is a disaster. The other argument is a bit harder-headed: unlike

capitalism better than the Tories. Or, as the modern jargon has it, make markets more dynamic. Labour's strategists argue that this is a perfectly acceptable line of attack. After all, two recessions, an unsustainable boom, the loss of the reserves in macro-economic management's biggest cock-up in more than half a century and the squandering of the North Sea oil windfall suggests that Conservative stewardship has not exactly been unblemished. However, if Labour is to be a success — even in its own terms — it is still crucial that it get the macro-economy right. In essence, that means making a distinction between the largely successful American approach to macro-economic management and the disastrous French approach. For the French, stability appears to mean over-valued exchange rates propped up by excessively high interest rates and, as a result, permanent deflation. For the Americans, stability is quite consistent with low interest rates, indifference to exchange rates and a bias towards expansion. Gordon Brown knows all this. He and his team are close to the Clinton economic policy-makers, and aware that people like Larry Summers and Robert Reich argue forcefully that necessary structural changes of the sort Labour is proposing only make sense against an expansionary macro-economic background. A policy conducive to growth really means a loose monetary policy coupled with a restrictive fiscal policy — again, the strategy followed by the Clinton camp. Keeping fiscal policy tight has two ad-

vantages — it prevents expansion being overly dominated by consumption and helps keep long-term interest rates down. (This is not to say, incidentally, that fiscal policy should be set in aspic: there is scope for different spending priorities and changing the taxation regime.) If this is what Mr Brown means by stability, then he will deserve support. Some of his statements suggest that he is in favour of the sort of controlled expansion that would allow the economy to grow at 3-3.5 per cent for a number of years, a rate which, according to some officials, could eventually bring the jobless total below 1,500,000. Labour, we are promised, will have a Medium Term Growth Strategy, will reorganise the Treasury to make it a ministry of economics as well as a finance ministry, and introduce a more broadly based monetary policy committee at the Bank of England. It has to be said, however, that Labour's economic policy sometimes comes across as rather more orthodox and it is often hard to know with which of its two voices the Opposition is speaking. Acting tough in order to convince people that Labour will never again preside over 25 per cent inflation is one thing, trying to outdo the Conservatives in anti-inflation street cred, as Mr Blair attempted in his Maastricht lecture, another. The hard truth is that only if the mix of monetary and fiscal policy is conducive to growth can the second half of Labour's macro-economic plan slot into place. This involves tackling job insecurity through a sustained increase in investment designed to in-

Wage subsidies can help to stop the rot in giroland

Richard Thomas
N ILL Davies is the sort of person for whom New Labour has reserved its most interventionist economic policy. After more than two years on the dole, he has just landed a job as a labourer at SDB Kitchens in Waverton, Cheshire — but not without the aid of state help. Labour wants to expand radically. The Government put him forward for the post, boned his interview technique, then agreed to pay a chunk of his salary. Mr Davies is fortunate to be living in one of three areas where the Government is piloting its WorkStart programme, in which people who have been unemployed for more than two years receive a wage subsidy. Without this, Mr Davies is convinced he would still be in giroland. "I'd sent off thousands of applications," he says. "But it just gets harder and harder. They

end up not even bothering to reply." His boss gets the minimum subsidy of £38 a month. For those who have been claiming benefit for 10 years, the subsidy rises to over £200. Labour, which places wage subsidies at the heart of its "welfare-to-work" strategy, has bolder plans. Any firm taking on someone who has been on the dole for more than two years will get a £75 subsidy every week for six months. Under Labour, Mr Davies, who earns £3 an hour, would come half-price. The rationale for this scale of micro-economic intervention is two-fold. First, those who remain out of work for a long period pay a high price in terms of social exclusion. Suicide rates, marital breakdown and the effects of poverty on children all soar once the 12-month milestone is passed. Three months out of work is inconvenient; three years is a disaster. The other argument is a bit harder-headed: unlike

the short-term jobless, they are not carrying out their national duty of restraining inflation. Because skills become eroded and work habits are lost as time passes, employers look askance at people with long periods of unemployment on their CVs. They don't compete in the labour market. Doreen King, WorkStart co-ordinator for the North-west pilot area, agrees that a vicious circle sets in. "They can't afford a phone, car, or even clothes — bless them — on the pittance they have to live on. We have to stop the rot setting in." By stopping the rot, Labour argues, wage subsidies would allow the economy to grow faster without triggering price pressures. And because the subsidies take the place of benefits already being paid, it pays for itself, too. Everyone wins. Stephen de Blasio, Mr Davies' employer, supports moves to make the scheme more generous. "If there was more money, it would be more attractive," he says. "At the moment, people aren't better off in work. The Government should use more of that money to subsidise them into work." But things are never as rosy as they seem. Wage subsidies have a number of problems. Lots of the people hired on the cheap would have found work anyway — the economists call this "deadweight" cost. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which looks kindly on this sort of active labour market policy, reckons that up to half of the cost could be deadweight. PETER Brinkman, a barrister at a local recreation centre under the WorkStart programme, probably falls into this category. Tony Brown, chairman of the centre's committee, says: "He is the sort of person we would have taken on anyway. If a vacancy came along, we'd definitely have hired him." Propponents of subsidies, including Professor Dennis

Snower, point out that even if half of the subsidised people represent dead-weight cost, the other half would not have otherwise found a job. The glass is half-full, not half-empty. A second danger of subsidies is that unscrupulous employers might use the cheap labour to replace existing staff. The Labour Party reckons this problem of substitution could be tackled by rigorous monitoring. But, once the scheme is established nationwide and firms sussed it out, it seems inevitable that some existing employees would be losers. Of course, the firms currently benefiting from the pilot scheme are horrified at this suggestion. Mr de Blasio says: "I wouldn't lower myself to those sorts of tactics." Mr Brown at the recreation centre admits it could happen, just not there. "You could just throw them back out. We just don't work that way. We go from the heart, not the head." The third danger with subsidies is that the long-term unemployed displace the shorter-term jobless from the front of the queue, with the overall demand for labour unchanged. The result is more churning within the jobless population — not more jobs. Labour admits that subsidies are no substitute for a strong macro-economic environment and the creation of new jobs. But, given that those who have been out of work for a long time are likely to stay that way, and that they pay a high social cost with no economic benefit, nudging them to the front of the queue may be worth it in itself. Mr Brown certainly sees the approach as a second-best, made necessary only by the failure of politicians to tackle unemployment at root. "I'm completely against schemes — YTS was disgusting," he says. "If it is the only way people like Peter can get a job, we have to go along with it. But my heart tells me we should take people on properly."

FA and opera house share worthy goal

Briefing Sarah Ryle

YOU can have too much of anything. Easter eggs at Easter. Turkey for Christmas. Beef, for some, just about always. It is a pretty safe bet that, whatever discounts shops offer on chocolate eggs over the next few days, there will still be a surplus, at the end of this week. There are times when the usual rules of supply and demand break down because factors outside producers' control become more influential. Beef is a good example. Although some consumers will be tempted to buy beef as prices plummet in the face of the BSE scare, many will choose not to run the unquantifiable risk posed by a shepherd's pie. Demand is likely to become increasingly inelastic. But at least by responding to the scare with lower prices, producers and retailers are making an effort to maintain the traditional British roast. Recent events in the field of another British obsession, football, showed a total failure to appreciate basic supply-and-demand principles in

the highest echelons of the sport. The Football Association came under fire for somehow failing to sell out one of the highlights of the soccer calendar, the semi-final between two of Britain's most passionately followed and on-form clubs. The game between Liverpool and Aston Villa should have been played in front of a capacity crowd. It was held at Old Trafford, the home ground of Manchester United and a modern, high-class stadium. It was within easy travelling distance of both visiting teams' fans. Granted, it was on Sky television, but any football supporter will tell you that watching the match on TV is not as good as being there. So why was the ground only 80 per cent full? Liverpool returned 6,000 of their 23,500 tickets unsold and Aston Villa returned 4,400 of their 23,004. The FA imposed a pricing structure at Old Trafford which took the average weighted price to £21.68. Almost all of the Old Trafford returns were tickets priced at the top level of £38. But at Villa Park, the venue of the other semi-final played on the same day and televised by the BBC, Chelsea sold all of their 18,500 allocation while Manchester United sold all but 700 of their 19,000. The 700 outstanding were all priced at £38. The key difference seemed to be that the smarter Old Trafford ground had 66 per cent of its seats priced at £38 or £39, while Villa Park mustered 67 per cent of the better-appointed pews. The market almost cleared at Villa Park but by the accident of its seating status rather than by the design of the FA. The FA got it wrong in both cases. It assumed that demand was less elastic than it proved to be and so the market did not clear. Perhaps the FA could have learned a lesson from the Royal Opera House, an organisation which has become famous for its success in selling out at unjustifiable prices. On closer inspection, the allegations seem to be a little harsh. The Opera House has a pricing system with 131 levels. The range depends on the performance. Time for Wagner's The Ring, which corporate affairs director Keith Cooper compared with an FA Cup semi-final as opposed to a Domingo concert which would be the final item, the average price was £76 with the range starting at £10 for the 2,000 tickets and rising to £140 (for 12% of the total). Result: full house. But for a recent performance of three modern ballets, the average ticket price was £17.90 with a range of £2

to £34, and 800 of the seats available priced at £13.50 or less. Result: also full house. The comparison, like most, is flawed because the Royal Opera House's supply curve goes vertical at 2,000 tickets whereas Old Trafford's has to reach almost 25 times that before no more seats are available. There are other factors to consider, such as popular appeal and income. Is opera's popularity as widespread as football's, and do most football fans enjoy the same earnings as opera devotees? The logical step, economically speaking, would be for football and opera organisers to test the elasticity of demand until they discovered the price equilibrium. Fortunately, football and opera have elected to consider social and moral factors. Illogical, but commendable.

Converging battle lines

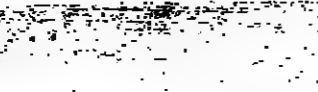
Worm's eye Dan Atkinson

B AFFLED and bewildered by the prospect of having to vote on the single currency? Bone up now on the big issue with our EMU Instant Burial Guide! This is a decision we may never have to take. Because it will be taken for us. Nobody said meeting the convergence criteria would be easy. But you won't really miss all those hospitals, honest. The lessons of the ERM experience have been learned: we won't let the Danes vote this time. It is all a question of balancing the pros and cons of the argument. And then joining.

On the one hand, the single currency will bring undoubted benefits: For bankers, multi-millionaires and big business. On the other hand, there will be a downside: For everybody else. Essentially, it is a technical matter. So belt up and do what you're told. There will have to be additional compensation to the poorer regions: Huge hand-outs for Spain and Portugal. As well as for those on the European periphery: And for Ireland and Greece. But Europe is about solidarity or it is nothing. So let's scrap the British fishing fleet. It is, above all, a vision of fraternity. And the British beef industry. What Europe needs is a currency that everybody can trust to hold its value: The Swiss franc.

There is no question of EMU proceeding before there has been the widest possible consultation. It will proceed immediately afterwards. But EMU will lead to the creation of millions of new jobs in the United States. And to a strengthening of society in general: As witnessed in France. A single currency would leave Parliament with wide discretion in economic policy. Discretion over car-park charges, dinner-money contributions, a penny rate. Important financial matters will remain with our own MPs: Such as Parliamentary pay rises, allowances, bribes, consultancy pay-offs... Abandonment of a single currency will lead to war (German chancellor). Winter for Poland and France. There can be no slowing down for the British (more German chancellor). My patience is at an end. EMU will mark a step-change in European democracy: By handing the economy over to central bankers. There may have to be penalties for countries remaining outside the single currency: Penalties enforced by the single European army. Competitive devaluation would be a hostile act: It's war.

Ticket demand



Indicators

Table with 2 columns: Indicator and Value. Includes UK Industrial production (Feb), UK Trade balance (BoP) (Feb), UK Consumer confidence (Mar), etc.

Tourist rates — bank sells

Table with 2 columns: Country and Rate. Includes Australia 1.9850, France 7.4625, Italy 2.353, Singapore 2.06, etc.

Racing

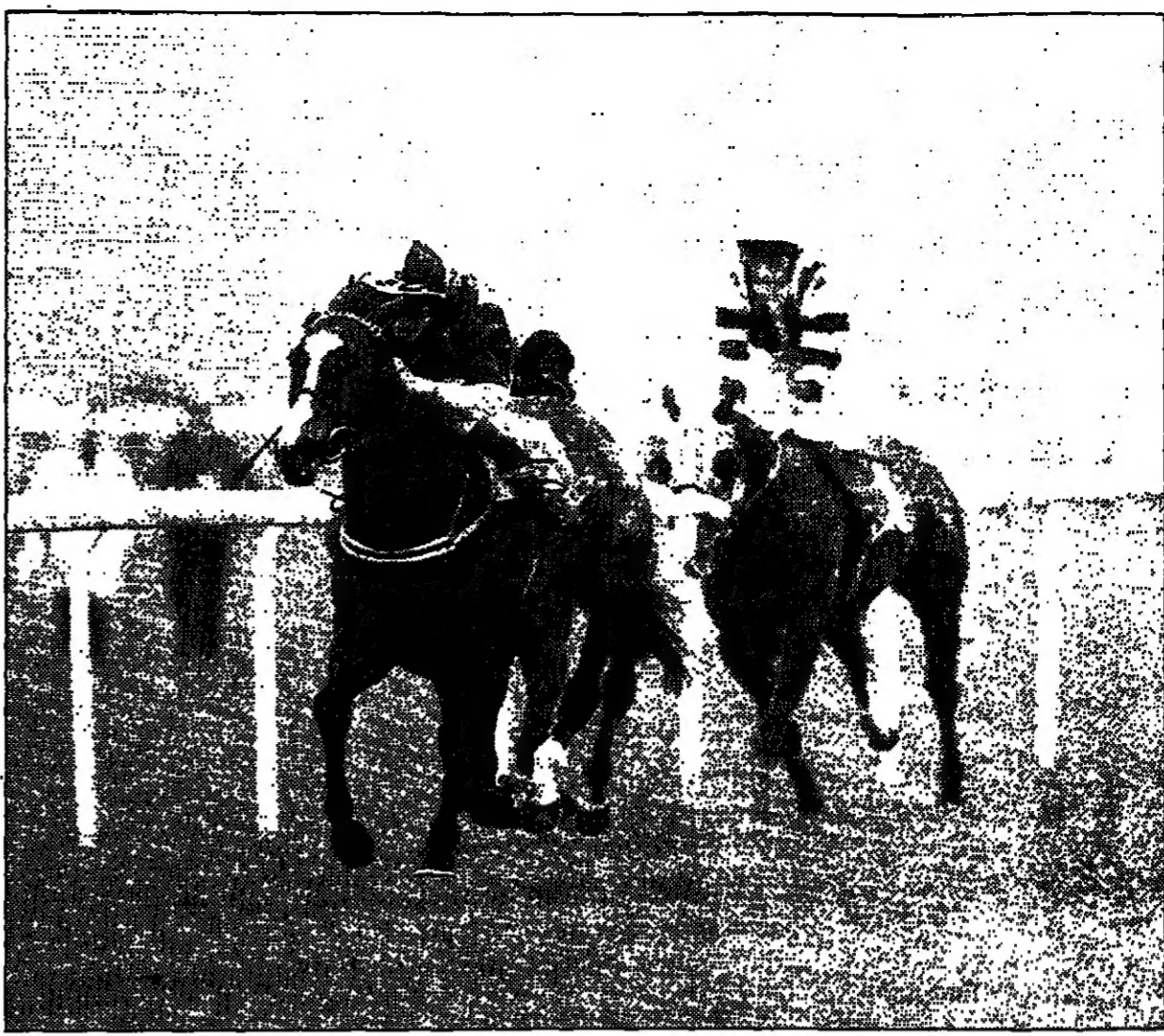
At Liberty can score for in-form Hannon stable

Chris Hawtkins

CYNICS will no doubt say that Easter Bank Holiday racing was invented by bookmakers who know a good thing when they see one and have never been known to exploit the poor old punter. Nearer the truth is that racemasters see the holiday as an opportunity to pack 'em in and 16 meetings today testify to that with so much racing, backers find themselves overwhelmed by choice but their capacity to absorb punishment and come back for more has long been the foundation of the betting industry. After a nightmarish Cheltenham, a dreadful Doncaster and an anguished Aintree, the punters had to concede another round at Kempton on Saturday, although Frankie Dettori's Haydock four-timer did something to restore the balance. Things do not look much easier at Kempton this afternoon when the Westminster Taxi Insurance Rosebery Handicap is the centrepiece of an eight race card.

Following a stable in form gives you half a chance and Richard Hannon's At Liberty (3.40) looks a decent value today. Dane O'Neill, an outstanding apprentice, who won the Lincoln for Hannon on the 33-1 shot Stone Ridge, takes the ride on At Liberty, a colt whose best effort last season was a close second in the King George V Handicap at Royal Ascot. He seemed well suited by the mile and a half then and he should certainly be finishing over this afternoon's shorter trip. On the Royal Ascot form, Special Davy won the Rosebery first time out last year and must be on the short list, but John Dunlop's horses have been running as if they need a week or two more. This is not so with Peter Chappell-Haydn, who has hit form straightaway, and he could land a double today with Regal Archive (2.10) and Orinoco River (2.40). The former makes his debut in the first division of the Stark Maiden Stakes over seven furlongs but is thought to be well above average. Only six go to post for the Quill Conditions Stakes, providing The Puzzler (3.10) with a good chance to recapture his smart Irish form of a couple of seasons ago. Once with Michael Scantles he is now trained by Barry Hills and showed he still had ability when finishing runner-up to Fire Dams at Doncaster recently with hard To Figure (now 4th worse off) six lengths behind. Captain Horatia attempts to win the Magnolia Stakes for the second year running although the presence of his stable-companion, Medaille Militaire, complicates matters. In these circumstances it may be best to ignore them both and plump for the form horse Wjara (4.28), second to First Island at Doncaster in a decent time on the opening day of the season. At Newcastle one of the best bets should be Atheryn (4.25) trained by Jeff Pearce, the former jump jockey, who produced Prospector's Cove to win at Kempton on Saturday.

Atheryn has Comic's Future to beat but his two promising runs in good class juvenile events at Newmarket last autumn suggest he is useful and he will certainly relish this mile and a half. In the Jameson Irish Grand National at Fairyhouse, Flashing Steel will be attempting a notable double. He ran on gallantly under 12 stone to peg back the ill-fated Rust Never Sleeps last year and has been laid out for the race again. Jodami, Cool Dawn and the Queen Mother's Northern Conqueror are the British challengers. Norman Conqueror seems better than ever at 11 years of age but the same cannot be said of Jodami, plagued with a succession of ailments and injuries. The ground is in favour of Jodami, who travels well on the bit these days but does not find much of it. My preference is for the improving Go Go Gallant (3.55), trained by Cheltenham Gold Cup hero Fergal Sutherland. Charlie Swan, the Irish champion, rides this sound jumper at the bottom of the handicap.



One for the bookies... Wannaplantree lands a 25-1 shock in Saturday's Queen's Prize at Kempton PHOTO: GEORGE SELWYN

Kempton runners and riders

Table listing race details for Kempton, including race numbers, names, and runners.

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Paul Holley is facing the prospect of four weeks on the sidelines after a fall at Newton Abbot on Saturday. An X-ray at Torbay General Hospital confirmed the jockey will be out of action until early next month due to injuries sustained when Givus A Buck came to grief at the second fence in the Touch of Spring Handicap Chase. "I have cracked a rib and chipped a bone in a vertebra and it is very sore," said Holley, who was not detained in hospital overnight. David Bridgwater reached 100 winners in a season for the first time at Newton Abbot on Saturday when Balasani, trained by Martin Pipe, landed the St Austell Claiming Hurdle. He had been stuck on 99 for 10 days.

Nottingham

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Fairyhouse Chan 4

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Channel 4

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UNITED KEEP TITLE FIRMLY IN SIGHT • NEWCASTLE EYE RENEWED CHANCE • LIVERPOOL SEE RED

Premiership: Manchester City 2, Manchester United 3

Cantona's pain is United's gain



Touch too much... Eric Cantona flicks the ball past the lunging Nigel Clough at Maine Road

Commentary David Lacey

Should Manchester United regain the Premiership title this season it is to be hoped, though not with much anticipation, that amid the mutual congratulations someone will remember to fax a message of thanks to the FA disciplinary committee.

over Manchester City at Maine Road could not have happened without those eight months of enforced idleness. Remembering the expressions of barely repressed fury on the faces of the United management after the FA had extended the club's own ban on Cantona beyond the end of last season it is unlikely that this will be recognised now.

challenge and Schmeichel's dive. In that instant City looked capable of overcoming United for the first time in seven seasons, but within six minutes they were heading for another defeat.

Coventry City 1 Liverpool 0 Evans in protest at Salako tackle

Martin Thorpe sees time cruelly running out for Liverpool

HAVING met with triumph last Wednesday, Liverpool found it impossible to treat disaster just the same on Saturday. At the final whistle Roy Evans and his coaches surrounded the referee and treated him to a prolonged verbal tirade as he escaped down the tunnel.

Newcastle United 2, Queens Park Rangers 1

Crowd dictate the way to Keegan's late balancing act

Cynthia Bateman NEWCASTLE go to Ewood Park tonight with Kevin Keegan convinced that his side can stop Manchester United taking the title.

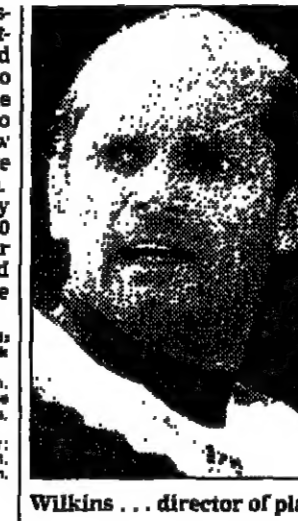
day. The final chapter is only just being written. Newcastle may find mid-table, lacklustre Blackburn an easier proposition than QPR, whose sterling efforts nevertheless left them second from bottom.

play which saw him almost always at the centre of things. On one occasion he was signalling other defenders into crucial positions, while heading away a clearance as though on auto-pilot.

son, who is red-hot with red cards. This time a yellow sufficed. QPR simply got on with things, counter-attacked and in the 53rd minute went ahead when Impey's cross was deflected by Betty into the path of Holloway, whose volley took Hislop and almost everyone else by surprise.

making changes in games" — made a substitution. "I've always said the fans run this club," he joked afterwards. "If they chant for Keith Gillespie, you have to put him on."

Five minutes later Beardsley had won the match, beating two defenders and squirming through a gap to crack a superb shot into the far corner. He left the pitch to a standing ovation. "Few people in the world can score a goal like that," said Keegan.



Wilkins... director of play

Advertisement for 'Think you could do better?' featuring a football management game. The ad includes the text 'Prove it.' and 'The award winning football management game Championship Manager 2 is now available in five incredibly exciting European versions (as well as the original English plus Scottish League).'

Southampton 1, Blackburn Rovers 0

Le Tissier's spot of pleasure offers Saints route to salvation

WHAT a difference a few moments can make at this time of the season. With less than 15 minutes to go Southampton looked destined for next-to-bottom place in the table. Then it all went wrong for QPR at Newcastle and it all came right for Matthew Le Tissier at The Dell.

stuck by him." But he owed as much to his makeshift back four of Neilson, Dodd, Widdington and Bennell, who limited Shearer and Newell to a couple of half-chances. Keenan, one of three former Saints in Rovers' side, gave Grobbelaar his only moment of concern when he hit a post.

Everton 3, Bolton Wanderers 0

Bolton turn up their toes

ONLY last season the great cavaliers of Bolton Wanderers were feted as footballing visionaries after cutting a swathe through the dead wood of the First Division. Those were the days — a lovely team playing lovely stuff.

trip to Goodison Park. They had to win but victories are achieved at such venues only by players of character, whose will to succeed is not shattered by the first painful rap across the shins.

"As a team we never really threatened," said the manager Colin Todd, proving again that he has now mastered the art of understatement. If Everton encounter such inadequate resistance in their remaining fixtures, they may yet qualify for Europe next season.

Reading 2, Ipswich Town 1

Reading make the most of Portman Road's surface tension

Reading made the most of Portman Road's surface tension to beat Ipswich Town 2-1 on Saturday. The match was a tactical battle, with Reading's defensive half proving particularly resilient.

Home Accident Surveillance System, conducted through hospitals. Sheppard might have been one of the five who needed treatment for accidents with a sleeve. He hooked, slipped, shanked, fell over — and still Reading passed back.

Wynalda shows way for San Jose

ERIC WYNALDA scored the first ever goal in the 10-team US Major League on Saturday, earning San Jose Clash a 1-0 win over Washington DC United.

"It meant more to me than any goal I've ever scored," said a tearful Wynalda afterwards. "The first yellow card was shown to Washington's Raul Diaz Arce for a foul after four minutes and in front of a sell-out San Jose crowd of 31,683."

First Division: Ipswich Town 1, Reading 2

Reading make the most of Portman Road's surface tension

A SUFFOLK punch would hold on Portman Road's pitch these days. In the late Eighties a farmer, offering snow-clearance aid, took the top off. The surface has gone down ever since while Ipswich have gone up and down.

strict and legs must endure. Reading will not want to start at their new stadium in the Second Division. Already their crowds are 3,000 down on last season.

Home Accident Surveillance System, conducted through hospitals. Sheppard might have been one of the five who needed treatment for accidents with a sleeve. He hooked, slipped, shanked, fell over — and still Reading passed back.

Why is over talking Yab

Handwritten Arabic text: صكران الامل

